

To: R2 EPA Region 2 (EPA Staff)[R2_EPA_Region_2_EPA_Staff@epa.gov]
From: Shore, Berry
Sent: Mon 3/7/2016 2:04:28 PM
Subject: Hoosick Falls and Ithaca Schools and POFA Drinking Water Issues: Media Coverage

Officials took months to warn residents of a tiny New York village of an impending disaster in their water supply

By Daniel McDonald

March 5, 2016

Daily News (Boonville, NY)

Water contamination in an upstate New York village has brought officials' handling of early information under scrutiny.

Just as lead in the water in Flint, Michigan took over a year to gain widespread attention, Hoosick Falls' battle with a synthetic contaminant has been quietly unfolding largely outside the public eye since late 2014. Despite cleanup efforts, recent testing suggests that the crisis is not over.

The village, with a population of 3,500, has been battling elevated levels of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in the municipal water supply — an “emerging contaminant” that poses “potential adverse effects for the environment and human health,” according to the EPA.

The contaminant has also been linked to a number of diseases, including kidney and testicular cancer. Michael Hickey, a resident who brought concerns about PFOA to the village board and mayor, began researching the link between the chemical and cancer after his own father died unexpectedly of kidney cancer.

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is now investigating the possibility of elevated cancer rates in the village. The state is also investigating the potential spread of contaminants to nearby towns.

But despite efforts to mitigate the contamination, elevated — in some cases increased — PFOA levels have still been detected in recent months and questions remain as to how so many months were allowed to pass before officials warned the public against drinking the water.

Mike Groll/AP PhotoIn this Thursday, Jan. 21, 2016 photo, Michael Hickey poses near Hoosick Falls municipal well 7 between two baseball fields in Hoosick Falls.

In late 2014, village officials, tipped off by Hickey, tested water samples and found that 1 of the 3 tested had a concentration of PFOA above the EPA's provisional guideline of 400 parts per trillion (ppt).

In statements to media and letters to residents, village officials stressed that the EPA's provisional health advisory for PFOA did not set an "enforceable standard" for safe drinking water levels and that the town was in compliance with what relevant regulation did exist.

Some state officials, for their part, say that they were not made aware of the situation as early as the village claims. The village website's timeline of events was still being corrected, according to Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge, during the reporting of this story.

In any case, citing the test results, the NYSDOH told village officials that the PFOA concentration in Hoosick Falls' public water "does not constitute an immediate health hazard." At the time, the state grouped PFOA with other "unspecified organic contaminants," which meant that up to 50,000 ppt was considered acceptable in water, 125 times the level advised by the EPA.

Nearly a year later, in December 2015, the EPA issued its own public notice explicitly recommending residents not drink the water in Hoosick Falls. A letter weeks earlier from the EPA to Borge cited new June test results obtained by the NYSDOH which found PFOA levels above 600 ppt in public water.

EPA spokesperson Mary Mears claims that the EPA did not receive the June test results until the

agency reached out to the NYSDOH in the fall.

Judith Enck, the EPA regional administrator who wrote the agency's letter to Borge, was only made aware of the Hoosick Falls situation in October when an attorney representing concerned citizens reached out to her, the Albany Times Union reported. At a town meeting, Enck apologized to residents:

"I'm sorry that we don't know how long you have been drinking contaminated water," Enck said. "No medical studies or surveys have been done in Hoosick Falls. Action should be taken to protect your health."

Mike Groll/AP Photo
Hoosick Falls Mayor Dave Borge speaks during a news conference on his village's contaminated drinking water on Friday, Feb. 26, 2016, in Hoosick Falls.

Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge claimed that the village was first informed of the June test results over the phone in August. He referred Business Insider to NYSDOH officials for details on the distribution of the department's June results, but state officials have not yet provided comment to Business Insider.

Borge noted that the EPA's November 2015 letter — its first recommendation against drinking the water — contradicted the earlier information provided by the NYSDOH.

"Since first learning about this issue in August 2014, officials from the Village of Hoosick Falls have pursued two goals: ensuring a clean, safe water supply for our residents and identifying the source or sources of PFOA in local groundwater so it can be cleaned up," Borge said by email.

Hickey is hesitant to place blame on single party — including Borge — for the delayed recommendation to avoid the water, citing instead the lack of cooperation between the various agencies involved. But he did seem shocked at the NYSDOH's response to the information they were supplied with.

“It seems like [the NYSDOH] just wanted to go the easy way out and stand behind the maximum of 50,000 ppt,” Hickey told Business Insider. He said that the department seemed not to know what to do with an unregulated contaminant, but called the initial response “pure laziness.”

Saint-Gobain, a construction materials company, and Honeywell have been named formally responsible for the contamination. Water samples near the Saint-Gobain’s Hoosick Falls Plant, though not in the public water supply, had been shown to have PFOA concentration as high as 18,000 ppt. Honeywell previously owned the site of the plant.

Saint-Gobain has agreed to fund bottled water until a permanent replacement is installed. It will also fund filters installed in the existing water treatment system.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation, moreover, made an emergency classification of PFOA as a hazardous substance in order to unlock funding for water filtration systems, free water sample tests, free blood tests, and additional planning for a “possible alternate water supply.”

Since the contamination looks to have spread to private wells and nearby areas, Hickey isn’t optimistic about new water sources: “I think it’s probably going to be a longer process.”

The state DEC says it has made “significant progress” in the search for new water sources.

Mike Groll/AP PhotoIn this Jan. 21, 2016 file photo, the Hoosic River runs through the village of Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

In January, the EPA issued a new statement, indicating that private well owners who have not tested their water or else found their water to test above 100 ppt—not 400—should stick to bottled water for drinking and cooking. This time, Mayor Borge and the state health department have expressed agreement with the EPA.

“I want to caution residents that the EPA’s recommendation to refrain from using the municipal water for drinking and cooking still remains in effect,” Borge was quoted as saying. “It will likely take another few weeks for NYSDOH to conduct a rigorous sampling program to ensure the carbon filtration system is effectively removing PFOA from the water.”

N.Y. Health Official Defends the Handling of Water Contamination Upstate: State was facing criticism over Hoosick Falls

By Mike Vilensky

Updated March 4, 2016 6:52 p.m. ET

The Wall Street Journal

New York state health commissioner Howard Zucker on Friday defended the handling of water contamination in upstate New York’s Hoosick Falls, ahead of a planned state hearing on the issue.

“We’re moving forward,” he said, following a news conference announcing state grants for New York hospitals. “We’re doing everything we need to do on this issue.”

Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s administration in January declared parts of Hoosick Falls a state Superfund site, classifying a contaminant found in the water supply as hazardous and authorizing its removal.

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In February, health officials said they also found traces of the contaminant, Perfluorooctanoic acid, in a nearby town and are providing the area with bottled water.

The state is facing criticism from residents and local officials who said it should have acted when

it was first informed of water concerns two years ago.

“Typically in a situation like this, someone’s head is going to roll,” said Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, a Republican who represents Hoosick Falls. “It’s inexcusable.”

Mr. Cuomo has previously said that New York was following guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency. And on Friday, Mr. Zucker said that his department responded aggressively to the issue and that nobody should be fired.

Referring to the federal government’s guidelines for how much Perfluorooctanoic acid in drinking water is safe, Mr. Zucker said, “remember, the EPA kept changing their numbers on us.”

The EPA has said it is still studying the substance.

Write to Mike Vilensky at mike.vilensky@dowjones.com

Zucker Blames EPA Over Delayed Response to Water Contamination

By Via Bobby Cuza:

Time Warner Cable

State health officials do not seem especially eager to field questions about the ongoing water contamination crisis in Hoosick Falls and other upstate towns.

State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker was in Manhattan this morning, deputized by Governor Cuomo to announce a new, \$1.5 billion investment in New York’s health care system, going toward 162 different projects statewide. The dollars will help fund infrastructure improvements with a goal, in the long run, of improving health outcomes for New Yorkers and

reducing hospital admissions and emergency-room visits in the process.

However, the roughly 14-minute announcement – which also featured remarks by Kenneth Raske, President of the Greater New York Hospital Association, and Rick Cook, COO of the Healthcare Association of New York State – came to a somewhat abrupt close without any attempt to entertain questions from the press.

Afterwards, as Zucker left through a side door, he was pursued by reporters and stopped to comment, briefly.

Asked by the Wall Street Journal's Mike Vilensky if anyone should be fired over the Hoosick Falls crisis, Zucker said, "Not at all."

"We're moving forward. We're doing everything we need to do on this issue. We have bio-monitoring of people. We have looked at wells, we have sampled the wells. We have been out there tackling all different issues. We put filters on. There's a crop and filter system that's been put in, it's being flushed as we speak today. And we're moving forward."

As to criticism these remediation measures should have been done sooner, he said, "All this stuff is moving forward. Remember, this was an unregulated substance before. And the EPA kept changing their numbers on us."

That comment was a reference to the fact that perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA – the hazardous chemical in question – was not on the Environmental Protection Agency's list of regulated chemicals when the issue first came to the state's attention. And that the EPA at one point lowered its guidance for acceptable PFOA levels from 400 parts per trillion to 100 parts per trillion.

The comments also echoed those made by Zucker and other state officials at a news conference in Hoosick Falls last Friday.

PFOA expert speaks to Hoosick Falls residents

By WRGB Staff

Sunday, March 6th 2016

Channel 6 News WRGB

Video at:

<http://cbs6albany.com/news/local/pfoa-expert-speaks-to-hoosick-falls-residents>

Richard Clapp is a professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health. He gave a presentation on Sunday afternoon to Hoosick Falls residents about the health impact of PFOA contamination. PFOA is a chemical that the New York State Department of Health has determined is in the village's water supply. Until further notice residents of the village of Hoosick Falls have been instructed not to drink the tap water or use it in food preparation. Dr. Clapp first discovered the potentially harmful effects of PFOA 15 years ago. "That was because of studies of workers at the DuPont plant in Parkersburg, West Virginia and other studies in Europe and Minnesota," Dr. Clapp said. According to Dr. Clapp PFOA has been linked to six ailments. "The ones that have been determined so far are kidney cancer, testicular cancer in men, high cholesterol, thyroid disease, hypertension in pregnancy and colitis," Dr. Clapp said.

Dr. Clapp spoke to a crowd of more than 100 people at the Armory on Church Street. Among them was Scott Carlone, who purchased a home in Hoosick Falls last October. "This has been very traumatic; we could have decided on a lot of places to buy the house, this is definitely not what we expected," Mr. Carlone said.

Dr. Clapp was asked how long does PFOA have to be in your system before you get sick. Experts have not come up with a definitive answer. "Some people are more susceptible than others and not everyone who's exposed to this chemical will get one of these diseases, but the chances are greater if they are susceptible and if they have been drinking the water for a long time," Dr. Clapp said.

Latest Hoosick well tests show safer levels: State says 7 sites of 153 tested had higher PFOA level

By Bethany Bump

Updated 9:53 pm, Friday, March 4, 2016

Times Union

The newest round of state tests on public and private water wells in the town of Hoosick and village of Hoosick Falls show seven more wells with levels of a possible carcinogen above the threshold recommended by federal officials.

Most of the 153 wells tested over the last week had levels of perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, below the Environmental Protection Agency's safety threshold of 100 parts per trillion, an update from the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation posted Friday show.

Samples taken from seven wells showed levels above the threshold, though it's unclear where those samples were taken and what the levels were. Of the 146 samples coming in under the threshold, 82 had "non-detection" levels below 2 parts per trillion, 50 had levels between 2 and 50 parts per trillion, and 14 had levels between 50 and 100 parts per trillion.

State's latest round of PFOA water testing

The results of state tests on public and private well sampling in Hoosick Falls area conducted Feb. 26-March 4:

153 total wells tested

7 locations with levels over 100 parts per trillion

14 locations with levels between 50 and 100 ppt

50 locations with levels between 2 and 50 ppt

82 locations with levels below 2 ppt

The tests were conducted over a seven-day period from Friday, Feb. 26 to Friday, March 4. The week prior, a total of 145 wells that were tested revealed 42 spots with levels over the threshold.

The high PFOA levels were found more than 11/2 years ago by a resident whose father worked at the local plastics plant and later died of kidney cancer. Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics plant is likely the contamination source, state officials say. A total of 11 current and former manufacturing sites in the village may have used PFOA chemicals as well.

The DEC is installing new filtration systems on private wells with \$10 million in state funds. So far, 521 homeowners have requested the systems and 190 have been installed. Another 40 will be installed this weekend, the department said.

Most of the village water system was flushed with filtered water to remove residual PFOA. State officials warned residents to expect lower water pressure and cloudier-than-usual tap water during the flushing process, but said it's no cause for concern.

Rensselaer County testing water sources for cancer-causing chemical, PFOA

By newsroom@troyrecord.com

Posted: 03/04/16

Troy Record

TROY >> Rensselaer County is in the midst of testing all well-fed municipal water systems in the wake of two communities dealing with contamination by a carcinogenic chemical.

In a news release issued Friday, county officials said only one water source tested so far has shown levels of perfluorooctanoic acid that exceed federal Environmental Protection Agency advisory levels. That source, a well in the town of Petersburg, had a PFOA level of 130 parts per trillion, 30 percent above the EPA's advisory level of 100 PPT. However, a second town well registered only 42 PPT of PFOA, but water in the town's distribution system contained 98 PPT, according to county testing.

Petersburgh is the latest municipality in the county to report PFOA contamination, coming a few months after the chemical was found in high concentrations in the water supply in the village of Hoosick Falls. That village is still in the midst of flushing its water system after installing a temporary carbon filtration system and residents and businesses remain under a federal advisory not to use village water for drinking, cooking or bathing.

PFOA is a synthetic substance used in the manufacture of non-stick cookware, dental floss, electrical insulation, fabrics and other products. Chronic exposure has been linked to testicular cancer, kidney cancer, thyroid disease, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis and pregnancy-induced hypertension. Studies suggest other possible health consequences, including a connection to pancreatic cancer.

Taconic Plastics was identified as the closest potential source for the contamination in Petersburg, and as a result, the county, working with the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation, began sampling public and private water supplies within first a half-mile and then a mile of the company's plant on Coon Brook Road. The county plans to continue testing to include all municipal, well-fed systems in the county, including, in addition to Petersburg, the town of Berlin, the Hampton Manor Water District in the town of East Greenbush, the villages of Schaghticoke, Nassau and Castleton, and two water districts in the town of Schodack.

Initial results from the first round of samples indicated a pair of private wells within a half-mile of the Taconic Plastics facility had contamination levels of 53 and 51 PPT, while wells in the town of Berlin registered no higher than 15 PPT and the distribution system in Schaghticoke had

non-detectable levels of PFOA.

The lab testing was performed by Pace Analytical, an EPA-certified lab, through Bender Labs, with results provided to homeowners and municipalities tested. The county is continuing testing and will release additional results as they become available.

In the meantime, bottled water for Petersburg residents, paid for by Taconic Plastics, remains available at Town Hall from 9 a.m. to noon Saturdays and 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays, as well as at the Tops supermarket in Hoosick Falls. For more information on the availability of bottled water in Petersburg, call town Supervisor Peter Schaaphok at 369-0910.

The city of Troy regularly tests the water coming from the Tomhannock Reservoir, its sole source since 1960, and has not found any notable contamination, according to Christopher Wheland, the city's commissioner of public utilities.

For more information on the county's groundwater study, contact the Rensselaer County Health Department at 270-2655.

State Updates Progress on PFOA Testing

By Web Staff

Saturday, March 5, 2016 at 12:13 AM EST

Time Warner Cable News Capital District

State officials have shared a status update on water testing in the town and village of Hoosick Falls for the chemical PFOA.

Since last week, state Department of Health and State Department of Environmental Conservation officials found that seven wells contain levels of PFOA over 100 parts per trillion. That's the level set by the EPA for an advisory.

Of the 153 wells tested this week, 146 came back with results below that level. To date, a total of 49 wells in the Hoosick Falls area tested for PFOA contained dangerously high levels of the chemical.

DEC officials say they're continuing to install filtration systems for individual homes, with almost 200 systems installed so far. Officials say most of the village's water system has been flushed.

With the temporary filtration system installed, the village's water mains and distribution system are also set to be flushed with clean water, to remove any residual PFOA. Hoosick Falls residents are advised to continue using bottled water or in-home filters until the village's water system is re-tested.

Both the DOH and DEC are continuing to hold information sessions three times a week.

And for any questions, the Hoosick Falls water hotline remains open at 800-801-8092.

Perfluorooctanoic Acid Found in Merrimack Water; NH DES: Merrimack Village District Water System investigating "low level detection" in water at Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics facility.

By Tony Schinella (Patch Staff)

March 4, 2016 4:48 pm

Merrimack Patch

MERRIMACK, NH - The state is investigating whether or not PFCs or perfluorochemicals have an extensive presence in the town's drinking water supply after a test last week found low levels of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in tap water at a plastics plant.

Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics found 0.03 micrograms per liter in samples taken from four water faucets at their facility on Daniel Webster Highway, according to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. The water came from the Merrimack Village District Water System.

PFCs, the agency noted, is a man-made chemical used in a variety of products – like non-stick cookware, weather resistant clothing, and carpeting – that makes them resistant to heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. The acid has been used at the plant in Merrimack, according to the company and the previous owners of the facility.

The NH DES said while the US EPA had not set enforceable drinking water standards for the acid, it had established a “provisional health advisory” for any amount more than 0.4 micrograms per liter. PFOA has been detected in the water supplies and some private wells in Hoosick Falls, NY, and North Bennington, VT, other Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, according to the NH DES.

The company was reportedly buying bottled water for residents in those communities after the acid was found in drinking water, according to press reports.

Studies, according to the NHDES, have shown that nearly all people have some level in the chemical in their bodies although potential health effects from exposure “are not well understood,” according to Jim Martin of the NH DES.

PFCs were found in water at the former Pease Air Force base in Portsmouth in 2014, and officials moved to close the well where the contaminant was found.

Martin noted that the department would be working closing with the water district and the town “to ensure that residents are promptly informed of the results of the MVDWS well tests and any

additional information resulting from the planned groundwater investigations being conducted by Saint-Gobain and NHDES.”

Chemical discovered in Merrimack drinking water prompts investigation

By KIMBERLY HOUGHTON

Public Safety March 04, 2016

Union Leader Correspondent

Low levels of a perfluorochemical have been detected in the local drinking water, prompting an investigation by state environmental officials. Last week, representatives from Saint-Gobain

Performance Plastics notified the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services that perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, was discovered at low levels in samples taken from four water faucets at their Merrimack facility, according to a release from DES. “We don’t have any information at this time that indicates the water is not safe to drink,” Jim Martin of DES told the New Hampshire Union Leader. Still, Martin said if residents are concerned they could use traditional carbon filters such as Brita, or drink bottled water until additional testing is completed next week. Saint-Gobain in Merrimack is served by the Merrimack Village District Water System. Superintendent Ron Miner of the MVD was not immediately available on Friday to comment on the issue.

According to a statement from DES, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has not set an enforceable drinking water standard for PFOA, however a provisional health advisory of 0.4 micrograms per liter for PFOA has been established. The amount detected in samples from Merrimack’s drinking water late last week was 0.03 micrograms per liter. “Sampling to date in Merrimack has not identified PFOA at levels above the provisional health advisory level,” DES wrote in its statement issued Friday afternoon.

Saint-Gobain specializes in high-performance plastics, including flexible tubing applications, seals, coated fabrics, polymer products and bearings, according to its website. DES officials said that PFOA has been detected in other communities near Saint-Gobain facilities, including areas in New York and Vermont. “Because materials containing PFOA have been used at the plant in Merrimack, and out of an abundance of caution, Saint-Gobain voluntarily tested the water at its

Merrimack facility, and intends to test the groundwater,” says the DES release, adding DES will oversee the investigation, and is working with the town and MVD officials to determine if PFOA is present in any of the MVD wells that serve 25,000 customers in Merrimack.

Private wells near the Saint-Gobain campus will be investigated to determine if they have been impacted as well, said DES. DES said it will inform local residents as soon as the results of the well tests are available, and will issue any additional information concerning upcoming groundwater investigations. - See more at: <http://www.unionleader.com/Chemical-discovered-in-Merrimack-drinking-water-prompts-investigation#sthash.SpTAbyPm.dpuf>

Teflon replacement chemical causes cancer in animals, reports reveal

By Melissa Breyer

March 4, 2016

Treehugger.com

When a massive class-action lawsuit brought the toxic nature of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) to public light, DuPont set their sights on a safer replacement for the surfactant that was a key ingredient in Teflon, that which gives the non-stick to non-stick cookware and other sticky things. In 2009 the company introduced GenX, touting it as having a “more favorable toxicological profile” than PFOA (also known as C8). Yet at the same time, DuPont filed 16 reports of “substantial risk of injury to health or the environment” about its new chemical, according to investigative reporting by The Intercept.

“The reports, discovered in the course of an investigation by The Intercept, were filed under Section 8 (e) of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and submitted to the EPA between April 2006 and January 2013,” writes Sharon Lerner. “They cite numerous health effects in animals, including changes in the size and weight of animals’ livers and kidneys, alterations to their immune responses and cholesterol levels, weight gain, reproductive problems, and cancer.”

It’s crazy – DuPont actually submitted reports siting cancerous tumors in the liver, pancreas, and testicles of rats from exposure to GenX. Some rats in the same experiment also developed benign tumors, as well as kidney disease, liver degeneration, and uterine polyps.

DuPont's take on this? It was animals, not people, so no biggie. (Although last time I checked people were animals, too, but what do I know?) One researcher who signed the report downplayed the results by saying that "these tumor findings are not considered relevant for human risk assessment." Much like what DuPont scientists said about testicular tumors in lab animals from PFOA before it was linked to testicular cancer in people.

(Also, if findings in rats are not considered relevant for human risk assessment, why in the world are we torturing the poor things?)

"It's the same constellation of effects you see with PFOA," said Deborah Rice, a retired toxicologist who served as a senior risk assessor in the National Center for Environmental Assessment at the EPA. "There's no way you can call this a safe substitute."

Alan Ducatman, a physician who studies the health effects of these types of chemicals, told The Intercept that the news of GenX hazards "all has an eerie echo." He writes that GenX has the same trio of biological effects – on the liver, immunity, and the processing of fats – seen with similar chemicals, including C8. "This reminds me a lot of a path we have recently traveled. That journey is not ending well."

Indeed, not well at all. Sharon Lerner digs deep and uncovers a whole dark tangled mess about GenX, a chemical that is neither regulated nor tracked by the EPA, but which is being produced and released nonetheless ... and is known to cause cancer in animals. Read all the nitty-gritty at The Intercept ... and embrace your cast irons pans.

Shumlin, Brockovich to address Bennington water issue: Lawfirm with ties to Erin Brockovich will investigate contamination

By Edward Damon

Posted: 03/04/2016 09:10:23 PM EST

Berkshire Eagle

NORTH BENNINGTON: Gov. Peter Shumlin will visit town on Tuesday to meet with locals and officials about the water contamination issue, his office announced Friday.

Shumlin's announcement came hours after a law firm with ties to consumer advocate and environmentalist Erin Brockovich announced it added North Bennington to its investigation into a potentially harmful, man-made chemical found in water samples.

Shumlin will meet with officials and residents to discuss the issue on Tuesday, March 8, according to the governor's appearance schedule, which was released late Friday afternoon.

It will be the first time Shumlin will personally visit the area since perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a chemical linked to cancer, was found in water samples taken in the village of North Bennington late last month.

It was unclear at press time Friday exactly when and where Tuesday's meeting will take place. A spokesperson for Shumlin's office did not immediately return a request for comment.

"No one should have to worry about the safety of the water they drink," Shumlin said in a statement. He thanked residents affected by PFOA in their wells for their patience. He also said the state would remain vigilant in testing private wells, would continue providing bottled water and would address their health concerns. "We will be there for those impacted until the situation is resolved."

News that PFOA was also found in New Hampshire is concerning, Shumlin said. He said he spoke with New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan and expressed the state's willingness to work with its neighbor.

The state has tested 123 wells for PFOA since Tuesday, according to Shumlin's office. Investigators with the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are going door-to-door to homes within a 1.5 mile radius around the former ChemFab plant at 1030 Water St., North Bennington. It's within that radius where residents are being told not to drink or cook with

the water. The village and town public water system is not affected.

Chronic exposure to PFOA, once used to make the nonstick coating Teflon, has been linked to testicular, kidney and pancreatic cancer, as well as thyroid disease, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis and pregnancy-induced hypertension.

New York City law firm Weitz & Luxenberg is the legal team for Brockovich, who was portrayed by Julia Roberts in a 2000 biographical film carrying her name. <URL destination="http://www.benningtonbanner.com/localnews/ci_29556558/lawsuit-filed-over-hoosick-falls-n-y-water">The firm recently launched a class-action lawsuit against Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. and Honeywell International Inc. on behalf of Hoosick Falls, N.Y. residents, alleging drinking water containing PFOA for years made them sick.

</URL>"We are undertaking this independent investigation to understand why this has occurred and the ways in which residents have been harmed," Robin Greenwald, head of the firm's Environmental, Toxic Tort & Consumer Protection litigation unit, said in prepared remarks Friday. "We will be talking to residents about their legal options and to the authorities about how the ongoing contamination can be stopped."

The firm is also investigating PFOA in Petersburg, N.Y.

"We are facing a water contamination crisis across our country," Brockovich said in a statement. "North Bennington is the latest in a long line of communities who can no longer trust the most basic necessity of life. I hope this investigation will help residents understand more about the size and scale of the problem."

Erin Brockovich Expands Water Contamination Investigation To North Bennington

By Howard Weiss-Tisman

Mar 4, 2016

Consumer advocate Erin Brockovich and the law firm Weitz & Luxenberg announced Friday they are expanding their investigation into well water contamination to include North Bennington.

The State of Vermont announced last week that five wells near the former Chemfab plant in North Bennington tested positive for PFOA, a suspected carcinogen. This week, officials began going door-to-door to test private wells for contamination.

Saint-Gobain owned the plant up until 2002, when it closed, and the company is also suspected of contaminating wells in Hoosick Falls, New York, where similar PFOA contamination has been detected.

Brockovich and Weitz & Luxenberg recently filed a federal class-action lawsuit against Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. and Honeywell International Inc. on behalf of Hoosick Falls residents who have been drinking water contaminated by PFOA.

The case was filed after local residents reported falling ill after drinking and cooking with this water.

In addition, Ms. Brockovich and Weitz & Luxenberg recently announced an investigation into suspected causes and consequences of PFOA water contamination affecting Petersburg, New York.

Several wells in the North Bennington contain the same chemical that was found in the Hoosick Falls and Petersburg water systems.

"We are facing a water contamination crisis across our country," said Brockovich in a release about the investigation. "North Bennington is the latest in a long line of communities who can no longer trust the most basic necessity of life. I hope this investigation will help residents understand more about the size and scale of the problem."

Chronic PFOA exposure has been linked to testicular cancer, kidney cancer, thyroid disease, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis and pregnancy-induced hypertension. Studies suggest other health consequences include a possible connection to pancreatic cancer.

”Drinking PFOA contaminated water can have a devastating impact on human health,” said Robin Greenwald, head of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Unit at Weitz & Luxenberg, in the release. “We are undertaking this independent investigation to understand why this has occurred and the ways in which residents have been harmed. We will be talking to residents about their legal options and to the authorities about how the ongoing contamination can be stopped.”

New Water Tests Find Low Or Undetectable Levels Of Chemical

March 4, 2016 5:21 PM

Filed Under: PFOA, PFOS

DENVER (AP) — A health official says follow-up tests on the distribution systems of three Colorado water utilities found either low or non-detectable levels of a potentially harmful chemical.

The results disclosed Friday were from utilities serving the city of Fountain and the community of Security Widefield. Both are south of Colorado Springs.

The tests were for compounds called PFOS and PFOA, which were widely used in nonstick cookware coatings, firefighting foam and other materials.

Ron Falco of the state health department says follow-up tests on two wells did show levels that exceeded the federal government’s suggested maximums, but those wells have not been in use for weeks.

Falco says tests on pipelines and water tanks used to distribute the water either found non-detectable levels or levels that were below the suggested limits.

Tompkins' lead standard is twice federal limit

By Andrew Casler, acasler@ithacajournal.com |

March 4, 2016

Ithaca Journal

The Tompkins County Health Department has held that no local children have tested with elevated blood lead levels, but the department is using a threshold that's twice the CDC recommendation for elevated blood lead levels in children.

At least one Slaterville child has tested just under the CDC threshold, according to his mother.

Experts use a reference level of 5 micrograms per deciliter to identify children younger than 6 years old with high blood lead levels, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC reports that children with blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter are in the top 97 percentile of children when tested for lead in their blood.

However, the Tompkins County Health Department and New York State Department of Health say a blood lead level of 5 to 9 micrograms per deciliter is "a little more lead than most children."

When Nicole Harrington Rich had her three children tested after news that their elementary school had elevated levels of lead, her younger son, Jamison, 7, tested at 4.5 micrograms per deciliter.

“The nurse said they want children to be testing at 5 (micrograms per deciliter) and under, and she said it wasn’t something that I needed to lose sleep over at night, but she said it was the first 4.5 that they’d seen in their office since the increase of testing,” Rich said.

Both the county and state health departments say children have elevated blood lead levels when at 10 micrograms per deciliter, even though the CDC lowered its threshold in 2012. The lower limit encourages parents, doctors, public health officials and communities to take earlier action for reducing lead exposure in children, according to a CDC fact sheet.

Tompkins County Health Department Director Frank Kruppa did not respond to multiple requests for comment Friday morning about the CDC threshold for elevated blood lead levels.

Cause for concern?

As soon as Rich learned tap water in her daughter’s fourth-grade classroom was contaminated with lead at nearly 70 times the Environmental Protection Agency limit, she had her children tested for the toxic metal.

The sink in her daughter's classroom at Caroline Elementary contained lead at 1,000 parts per billion, and the drinking fountain in the room had a 62 ppb lead concentration, according to test results the Ithaca City School District released Feb. 23. The tests were the latest in a series of tests the district has done since two elementary schools tested high for lead in some locations in August and again in January. Parents were first notified about the issue after the January results. Water in the schools has since been shut off until the district resolves the issues.

The EPA's recommended lead level in water is zero, and the actionable level is 15 parts per billion.

“That kind of frustrated me because I know she and other students in the classroom refill their water bottles with that classroom sink,” Rich said.

Her daughter, Jersey, and older son, Julian, both tested with low levels for lead, Rich said. Only her youngest, Jamison, had results approaching the CDC threshold.

10 Ithaca schools fail lead tests; results questioned

Rich added that she tested for lead in her home's drinking water, and it was below the EPA's actionable level. The family home was fully remodeled recently, and there is no lead paint.

More than 70 students in the Tompkins County area have been tested for lead levels in their blood as of Wednesday, and no results showed elevated levels for the toxin, according to Kruppa.

The health department is checking on blood lead tests at two pediatric offices "on a fairly regular basis," Kruppa added.

Kruppa maintained earlier in the week that drinking water has never been found to be a primary source of elevated blood lead levels in Tompkins County, and the health department doesn't expect that water will become a primary lead source.

But that's not reassuring for Rich.

"I don't think the Health Department has handled this in a way to make us parents feel comfortable at all," Rich said.

Parents are "living this" issue of too-high lead levels in Ithaca schools, and she hopes local children haven't been harmed, she added.

"How many kids are testing at 4.8 (micrograms per deciliter) or 4.9 and it's not being reported as elevated?" she asked.

The Tompkins County Health Department is notified if anyone tests above 10 micrograms per deciliter, and no one has tested at that level, Kruppa said Wednesday.

If a child has 10 micrograms per deciliter or more, the health department sends an environmental health sanitarian and community health nurse to the family's home, Kruppa added.

"(The health department experts) meet with the families and talk about potential sources of lead, and we can do sampling and other tests at the home to try to find and identify the source so that it can be eliminated," he said.

No safe blood lead level in children has been identified, according to the CDC website.

Children 6 years old and younger are most susceptible to the effects of lead, which can affect almost every organ and system in a person's body, according to the EPA.

Lead poisoning damages growing cells and tissues, and it can cause behavior and learning problems, lower IQ, slowed growth, hearing problems and anemia.

Blood lead levels greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter are considered elevated levels in adults, according to a CDC report from 2013. Still, research has shown that blood lead levels previously considered harmless can have harmful effects in adults, such as decreased renal function and increased risk for hypertension and essential tremor with lead in blood less than 10 micrograms per deciliter.

The CDC recommends medical treatment for children with blood lead exposure levels greater

than or equal to 45 micrograms per deciliter.

After Jamison's blood test, the doctor's office suggested foods that could lower his lead levels, such as broccoli, kale, cauliflower and cilantro, Rich added.

"I'm curious to see what it looks like when we're tested again in 12 months, and in the meantime, I'm not losing sleep over my son's blood level, but I do have a lot of questions and concerns that I don't feel the health department is addressing completely or fairly," she said. "No lead is good; any amount is bad."

Kruppa encouraged parents to talk with their primary care providers about lead.

"Lead is important, and we would encourage people to talk to their primary care provider, and if they don't have one, they can certainly call the health department, and we'll give them as much help as we can," he said.

Districtwide lead problem

Water testing from February at each Ithaca City School District's 12 school buildings has shown lead concentrations that exceed EPA limits.

Testing showed the highest lead levels at Enfield and Caroline elementary schools, according to results the school district released Feb. 23. They were the latest in a series of tests at those two schools, which use well water.

Tap water at the district's 10 remaining buildings also recently tested too high for lead concentrations. Those schools are on municipal water and thus aren't required to test.

Ithaca Superintendent Luvelle Brown and Tompkins County Health Environmental Health Director Elizabeth Cameron issued letters Thursday that cast doubt on the excessive lead concentrations.

An EPA guidance for water testing instructs that valves should not be closed before sampling.

"Minute amounts of scrapings from the valves will produce inaccurate results showing higher than actual lead levels in water," according EPA guidance on testing drinking fountains.

The water system was shut off at 10 p.m. the night before water sampling at Caroline and Enfield schools, Cameron wrote. Also, a leak depressurized the Caroline water system the night before testing, which may have created "disruptive, turbulent scouring conditions in the water pipes," potentially releasing lead into the system, she said.

At the district's other schools — six elementary, two middle and two high schools — valves at each fixture were closed the night before sampling.

"Because of concerns with these improper sampling procedures, the results may not be representative of actual conditions and may have produced inaccurate results," Cameron said in a letter released Thursday.

TST BOCES collected the samples as part of its health and safety service, according to Superintendent Jeffrey Matteson.

Matteson said he would leave it to the county health department to determine if EPA standards were not followed during the water sample collection process.

"As of last Friday, we've paused on any water sampling until we have the protocols that (the Tompkins County Health Department) would like us to follow locally," Matteson said. "We will be following their standards when they release them."
